

Memorandum

To: Honorable Mayor John Leahy and Members of the Lowell School Committee
From: Dr. Joel D. Boyd, Superintendent of Schools
Date: December 4, 2020
RE: UPDATES TO SCHOOL ASSIGNMENT POLICY

Attached for your review and consideration, please find recommended updates to the School Assignment Policy 2021 Addendum File: JCA. Data gathered through family surveys indicate that most families - who were previously assigned to in-person learning for the original *Phase 1* of our re-opening plan following the assignment lottery in September – anticipate returning for in-person learning. However, a small percentage have now decided that remote learning is a better fit for their children and plan to remain remote even if the district expands in-person learning. As a result, there are anticipated vacancies at some grade levels in some school locations within the 25% in-person capacity limits that were established for *Phase 1*.

The recommended updates in the attached policy build on the lessons learned from the first round of student assignment and leverage the best thinking of school-based leaders and centralized support staff to facilitate a more efficient process, ensuring that the most vulnerable learners at each school are able to access every available in-person seat at every school as soon as the local health data supports a full return to *Phase 1* of in-person learning.

The scaling back of *Phase 1* of our re-opening plan on October 19 from 25% in-person learning to 3% was based on surging cases of COVID-19 in Lowell. Since that time, both the number of incidences and the positivity rate have continued to increase significantly each week. Our decision-making process requires three weeks of downward trending COVID-19 data along with consultation with the Lowell Board of Health prior to expanding in-person learning, so no definitive date can be provided for a full return to *Phase 1* of our re-opening plan at this time.